1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13



101 because they have among them no such remnants of perishing tribes, appear
648 to know nothing of this fivefold group, but they recognize their close relationship to the Arapaho. There is no very great amount of intercourse between them and the Arapaho at present, nor does there appear to have been any unusual amount of communication during the greater part of the nineteenth century; but on both sides there is a mutual recognition as of separated relatives. The Arapaho are now and apparently have been for a long time considerably the larger tribe, the Gros Ventre having always in
[161] historical times been regarded as a small body. Their present number is about 550.

131 According to Hayden, the Gros Ventre, about 1800, were south of the
648 Saskatchewan; about 1820 they united with the Arapaho for a few years, and then, following a quarrel, journeyed north, had a disastrous encounter with the Crow, and became neighbors and allies of the Blackfeet.[1] In spite of the usually close association of the Gros Ventre with the three Blackfoot tribes since that time, they became hostile to them for a time, about forty years ago, and united against them with their own long-standing enemies the Crow. In the course of this hostility the Gros Ventre sustained their heaviest reverse in war within their memory; the greater part of an unusually large war-party, including many Crow, being killed after an attack on a Piegan camp. This happened in 1867, according to Grinnell. The usual enemies of the Gros Ventre, besides the Crow, were other Siouan tribes, such as the Dakota and especially the Assiniboine. They also fought more or less with the Shoshone, and no doubt in alliance with the Blackfeet against the Salish Flathead. They were on the whole friendly with the tribes of their own stock of speech, the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Blackfeet, and Cree. The habitat of the Gros Ventre in recent times has been the Milk River territory, in which is situated their present reservation, which they occupy jointly with the Assiniboine.

101 The Gros Ventre have also been called Fall, Rapid, and Paunch Indians. The term "Gros Ventre" has also been applied to the Minitari, a Siouan village tribe on the Missouri; and the two tribes have been distinguished as "Gros Ventre of the Prairie" and "Gros Ventre of the Missouri."

174 Gros Ventre tradition brings the tribe from the north; but their story of
131 the division of the tribe while crossing the ice on a great river is found also
[173] among the Blackfeet and the Cheyenne, and is worthless as historical evidence. While their earliest habitat known is north of their present territory, acquaintance of them goes back little more than a century, and there is

[1] See the excellent article by H. L. Scott on The Early History and the Names of the Arapaho, in the American Anthropologist, N.S., IX, 545, 1907. From this it appears that, at least from the middle of the eighteenth century on, except for about five years' association with the Arapaho (from 1818 to 1823), the habitat of the Gros Ventre was in the Blackfoot country, between the Saskatchewan and the Missouri.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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seemed that the others present agreed with him, the leader would give in and have the crier announce the revised decision."

On the march, the leader went at the head of his band and showed the way. When several bands were together, the leader of one would have decided where he intended to go, and, if the other bands had decided to go along with this one, they followed, but were free to break away at any time.

The band to which either the Keeper of the Flat Pipe or the Keeper of the Feathered Pipe belonged had a certain distinction as there was a tendency when the tribe split for each to have a considerable following.

According to tradition, as related by The Boy, the Gros Ventres had had in the fairly remote past a formally selected chief or leader of the whole tribe. It was said that he functioned when the whole tribe was together and that his decisions in important matters were made in consultation with the chief men, including the leaders of all the bands. There was no regular council and anyone present might express his opinion. Often the Keepers of the Sacred Pipes were present at such meetings called by the tribal chief, but if they were not present they were supposed to be kept advised.

The last regularly selected leader of the whole tribe was said to have been White Eagle, who held this position in the last decades of the eighteenth century. It was said further that White Eagle was preceded by White Shield, of whom there are many stories extant, and that White Shield was preceded by Elk Going Against The Wind. The Boy gave the following information regarding the "election" of White Eagle. The account was given to The Boy by his father, Lame Bull, who had it from Old Man Gopher, a cousin of Lame Bull's paternal grandfather. "The Gros Ventres had been badly decimated by smallpox and only about 30 lodges were left.[8] Old Man Gopher and his sister, both of them very young children at the time, were the only survivors of their family. The old men among the survivors of the tribe got together and proceeded to choose a chief. White Eagle was then a young man

[8] A reasonable chronological estimate would identify this as a tradition referring to the devastating smallpox epidemic of 1780. For historical data, see p. 9.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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and he knew that the old men were meeting. When he was called in he wondered 'Why do they call a man so young as I?' But after White Eagle accepted the pipe and prayed with it,—thus accepting the office,—all said 'Ai-e-e-e-.' Then White Eagle called one of the attendants: 'I am through praying. Come and get this pipe.' The attendant got up and took it to the first band chief to the left of the door as one entered the lodge. The band chief lit the pipe, said prayers to White Man Above, passed it to the next man on his left who likewise smoked, prayed and passed the pipe on until it reached the last man to the right of the door. Then the pipe was passed back, with no smoking except by the two Keepers of the two Sacred Pipes who were present, and then the two attendants and the announcer smoked. After that, they smoked socially and told stories until White Eagle got up to talk and told what he thought should be done, what would be for the good of the people.

"When White Eagle accepted the pipe he said, addressing the old man who had gathered the others together: 'Old man, I accept the pipe. I accept it with my whole heart. I am a young man, I am rather backward about everything. But since you chose me to be your head chief I take it with good will. Since I've done what you have asked me, in return I'm going to ask you to do everything I request. Don't refuse me. Don't think because I'm a young man what I say may be taken lightly. Now we've had smallpox and there are many dead. Among the living are many single men and single women. This very night I want each man to select a wife or each woman to select a husband—this very night I want *every* man and woman to marry. If this is done in a few years our old numbers will be restored. After the men and women get together we'll move to where there are buffalo. We will kill buffalo and tan the hides for lodges and bedding for these couples and, after this is done, we'll cut poles for the lodges, so each new married couple will have a home of their own. If we do this our population will increase fast.' After this speech White Eagle told the announcer to tell the people what he had just said and to tell the women not to refuse the men who ask them, and the men not to refuse the women who ask them. So the announcer told all this in the name of White Eagle, the head chief from then on. All was carried out as he had ordered and in a few years the population had

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very much increased. White Eagle governed the people very wisely and he governed until he died."

643 It was The Boy's impression that following White Eagle, the chief of the whole tribe was no longer formally selected and simply attained his position through gradual recognition of his merits.[9] Sits Like A Woman succeeded White Eagle and was tribal chief in the first decades of the 19th century. He was followed by his son of the same name who was a signer of the 1855 treaty, and was still recognized as tribal head when he died suddenly about 1870. Coming Daylight claimed that this Sits Like a Woman II was certainly the greatest chief of her time and that, when he died, people were forbidden to light their camp fires as a sign of mourning. During the subsequent period Lame Bull was outstanding among the leading men, but he witnessed the dissolution of the [657] band system and the camp circle. The Fort Belknap Reservation had been set up in 1873, encompassing much more territory than at present, and the first houses were built in 1882.

619 In spite of the fact that a tribal chief was recognized, band
621 autonomy was apparently preserved. The ceremonial organization
796 cut across band organization, however, and band autonomy was relinquished at the times during which the Sacred Dances were held. The movements and activities of the tribe as a whole were then in the hands of the company to which the vower of a particular Dance belonged.[10]

## The Companies

561 Kroeber notes that "men of the tribe of age to make any one ceremony were not all in one society or company but in several, the total number of companies being three or four times as great as the number of ceremonies. Each company had a name which it

[9] So far as it goes, this would seem to confirm O. Lewis' interpretation, pp. 42–43, that the earlier Hudson's Bay Company policy on the northern plains reinforced tribal chieftaincy, but that with the development of competition in the fur trade, authority was weakened.

[10] For a discussion of the Sacred Dances, see Kroeber, 1908, pp. 239–68. Other details are given in Cooper, Ms. 1949. The following discussion is concerned only with the composition of the ceremonial organization so far as it can be reconstructed.